

*How would a Mormon candidate fare in ancient Athens?
Probably better than in the contemporary United States.*

THE SACRED SECRET OPEN TO ALL: YE ARE GODS

By Charles Randall Paul

Public opinion polls taken in Athens in the year 500 B.C. would have found that a candidate who was not initiated into the secret Eleusinian mystery rites could probably not be elected to lead the Athenian democracy. It was a sign of status to have the wisdom, discipline and means to be initiated into these sacred and secret religious mysteries.¹ This cultic tradition was also found in the Roman Empire, the emperor and other leaders being initiates of the mystery rites until at least as late as the second century A.D. Of these ceremonies, Cicero writes:

For among the many excellent and indeed divine institutions which your Athens has brought forth and contributed to human life, none, in my opinion, is better than those mysteries. For by their means we have been brought out of our barbarous and savage mode of life and educated and refined to a state of civilization; and as the rites are called “initiations,” so in very truth we have learned from them the beginnings of life, and have gained the power not only to live happily, but also to die with a better hope.²

Though no written records of the rites exist, some scholars think the Eleusinian mysteries were intended “to elevate man above the human sphere into the divine and to assure his redemption by making him a god and so conferring immortality upon him.”³ The sacred, secret Dionysian mysteries of the same period apparently included a similar theme of ascent from lower humanity to higher divinity in the afterlife. The mysteries were ancillary to the Greek reli-

gion, a way of heightening the initiates’ prior religious understanding rather than competing with it. There may also have been an element of sacred marriage involved. Although we do not know the actual content of the ritual, it was a sacred, secret rite considered a useful and legitimate form of worship, compatible with the society that supported it.

Among the evidences for the widespread knowledge of this sacred, secret rite is the fact that the mysteries inspired the annual public theater festivals. Here, any citizen who happened by could see many plays in which the core of the rites were embedded. Without revealing the specific content of the rites, these comedies disclosed the optimistic theme of the secret surprise of the religious mystery cult: that while we appear to be paupers, we are all really princes and princesses destined to inherit thrones as kings and queens, married happily ever after.⁴ Everyone went to the festivals knowing how the stories ended, but that did not matter; they wanted to feel the hope of a happy ending time and again. We infer from indirect written evidence left by historians, playwrights, and politicians that the secret, sacred mysteries provided instructions about how to endure difficulties in this life while gaining reason to hope for blessings in the life to come.

Although the availability of the rites was commonly acknowledged (they were managed and financed by the state), the content of the rites was sealed in general secrecy by the individual initiate’s promise not to reveal them in public. This vow presumably enhanced the sacred importance of the experience, and tested the integrity and sincerity of the initiates. Although these rites were secret, they were open to any serious citizen—man or woman—who wanted and had the means, to receive them. Thus, at the core of these societies lay sacred, secret knowledge that everyone could, and many did, know, but never discussed publicly. For centuries, initiates promised to keep the mysteries to themselves—



CHARLES RANDALL PAUL is the founder and president of the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy. After a career in business, he obtained a Ph.D. from the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He and his wife Jann Waid Paul have five children and ten grandchildren.



IN THE ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY, IT WAS A SIGN OF STATUS TO HAVE THE WISDOM, DISCIPLINE AND MEANS TO BE INITIATED INTO SACRED, SECRET ELEUSINIAN RELIGIOUS MYSTERIES.

and, remarkably, they did so.⁵ Other than a few pictures on vases and walls, and many indirect general references to them (including advertisements), we have no specific explanation of these ancient rites anywhere.

Even into twentieth-century America, initiation into sa-

cred secret rites open to all who desired them was considered appropriate for government leaders. In fact, at the founding of the United States, many of the new republic's political leaders were Freemasons. Fourteen U.S. Presidents have been Masons, including George Washington and both Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt.⁶ Lincoln applied to become an initiate, but to avoid criticism that he was attempting to buy votes by joining, he decided to defer initiation until after he left the presidency.⁷ While wearing his Masonic apron and using his ritual trowel, George Washington laid the cornerstone for the U.S. Capitol.⁸ Try to imagine that happening today!

The 2008 presidential campaign was an eye-opener for many Latter-day Saints, who were surprised to learn just how much mistrust of Mormons still exists in the United States. Of course, many factors besides his Mormonism contributed to Mitt Romney's losing bid for the Republican nomination, but poll evidence showed that a significant number of constituents would not trust the presidency to a Mormon because of his loyal membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In addition to the desires of evangelical Christians to withhold the stamp of legitimacy that a Mormon president would provide to what is deemed our "counterfeit" form of Christianity, Americans did not want to say to the world and to each other that Mormonism—the religion of their president—is an acceptable symbol to stand for all

Americans. No matter how talented he or she is, a Mormon president would still be a Mormon president of the United States, just as Barack Obama is an African-American president of the United States. A man of half-African and half-European blood with charisma, education, intelligence,

style, and a strong family life can stand for all Americans today, but a Mormon—not yet.

We Mormons seem to desire two incompatible goals. We want to be seen as leading Americans but also as a religious people set apart from other American religions and groups. Mitt Romney's campaign showed us we can not have it both ways. His candidacy revealed that even though we have been assimilated into U.S. society, it has been only as acceptable misfits. We may seem like hyper-normal, "red state" people, but many Americans sense that somehow—underneath that façade of hard-working probity—there is something different enough about us to be abnormal and untrustworthy. Unlike the Amish, we do not keep ourselves apart in communes, wearing nineteenth-century costumes, yet many of our fellow citizens seem to think that we still might have a hidden agenda that—like our temple undergarments—lies beneath our normal dress and extroverted demeanor.

I believe much of the suspicion directed toward Latter-day Saints arises from the secrecy associated with our private temple worship and its relation to marriage and polygamy. We sincerely say that we keep this aspect of our faith secret because it is sacred, but to outsiders, this explanation sounds like a double-talking evasion. Restricted access to our temples also seems strange to visitors who are used to seeing inside religious buildings throughout the world. The Mormons must be hiding something that others would find harmful or un-American.

Could any organization with a sacred secret in America today bring political advantage and perhaps even prestige to a candidate for president the way that initiation in the Eleusinian, Dionysian, and Masonic mysteries once did? I think not—at least not until we Latter-day Saints learn to better communicate the purposes of our temples as well as the reasons why we are hesitant to share everything about them.

We now live in a society so diverse that there is no common conception of the same sacred secret—we have no commonly espoused ascent mystery that everyone knows but does not discuss. In fact, rather than trusting people who give us the right secret handshake, we now distrust anything that is not transparent. Ongoing political and economic shenanigans have persuaded us that secrets are dangerous cover-ups for evil-doing. How often have we heard of the few in Washington and on Wall Street taking advantage of the many? The CIA and the Secret Service do not engender warm feelings of confidence in a popular culture where treason and surprise double-crosses invoke a dark theme opposite to that ancient comedic reversal. We've been burned enough to desire transparency for all institutions.

So when people find out about our secret, sacred rites, they naturally assume we are trying to exclude others in order to obtain some unfair or devious advantage. In other words, they're concerned that we're engaging in "secret combinations" perhaps like those described in the Book of Mormon, in which a number of groups, working under strict rules of internal discipline and secrecy, infiltrated var-

ious levels of government and commerce in order to murder and steal for gain (Helaman 6:20–32). This suspicion strikes us Mormons as odd, however, because with our doctrine of universal agency and access to exaltation, we think we are doing the exact opposite: establishing the most loving and outreaching organization in the history of the world—open to every person who has ever lived!

I believe this lack of trust in non-transparent operations of any kind is at the heart of the American people's response to Mormonism today. This is the reason that even when Mitt Romney stood up and said, "I am a Mormon running for President—not pastor—of the United States," many Americans (not just evangelicals, though they were the most concerned) still felt uncomfortable about trusting the helm to a Mormon.¹⁰ Given many people's lack of trust in the Mormons' ultimate or allegedly hidden motives, I believe we need to attempt to improve our trust quotient with the public by communicating our message in a way that shows that our secret, sacred teaching is good news, even for those who do not believe in it. But how?

We Mormons are, of course, not the only ones who have difficulty communicating openly about what we consider sacred. To some degree, all religions and ideologies struggle with the challenge of candidly sharing what they consider holy or unique with those who profess different beliefs. Some of this difficulty is inherent in the mystery itself: how do you explain something sacred and impossible to experience in the mortal state in secular language—or any language? Some difficulty arises from the fear of being misunderstood or ridiculed. Some comes from our own (currently limited) grasp of eternal matters, as well as out of concern for the well-being of others who, if they are not ready for the gnosis now, might so misjudge it as to keep themselves from eventually embracing it when they might be ready later.

In the case of Mormon temples, however, isn't there something we Latter-day Saints can be doing to communicate more effectively the nature of temple worship? I believe the key to disarming suspicions and engendering greater trust actually lies in the nature of the "secret, sacred" impulse in human souls to which our temple rites respond.

Because American culture has become so insistent on transparency and openness, it's difficult for the majority of our fellow citizens to understand why we don't just come out and say, "Come on in to the temple ceremony, folks. We have nothing to hide." Why not just let them in to experience it all? I believe that doing so would actually mislead the curious onlookers.

Walt Whitman, in his epic poem *Leaves of Grass*, channels "our" epic temple rite (really the great epic of all cultures across all times) as he faces the problem of speaking of the sacred secret:

A song of the rolling earth, and of words according,

Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright lines?

those curves, angles, dots?
 No, those are not the words, the substantial
 words are in the ground
 and sea,
 They are in the air, they are in you.
 Were you thinking that those were the words,
 those delicious sounds
 out of your friends' mouths?
 No, the real words are more delicious than they.
 . . .
 Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades,
 are as real as before,
 But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,
 No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,
 Undeniable growth has establish'd it.
 These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases
 of souls,
 (If they did not echo the phrases of souls what
 were they then?
 If they had not reference to you in especial what
 were they then?)
 I swear I will never henceforth have to do with
 the faith that tells
 the best,
 I will have to do only with that faith that leaves
 the best untold.¹¹

The problem with using words to describe the sacred secret, as if it were profane, commonplace information, is that this misrepresents the sacred secret. In the name of disclosure and transparency, we send a false message. Those who believe they understand the vocabulary of the sacred secret might conclude they know what the great mystery really is—that it is a mere story about the way all divine humans can achieve their ultimate destiny. Those who hold the sacred secret as sincere initiates, and have experienced the power of change in their hearts, and know in their souls, have a very different understanding of the mysteries. They see them from inside the experience. In a very real sense then, because the substance of the sacred secret is its ability to provide a vital, life-centering experience, no one can tell the mysteries to another who does not already know the mysteries.¹²

Without delving into the old philosophical problem of isolated subjectivity, we can agree that it is impossible to transfer our deepest experiences from one person to another. That is because these experiences entail the intimate revelation of the wholeness of each person to the self—that which (in the case of the mysteries) is divine in the self is related to others but not identical to them. At the nexus of our eternal freedom and uniqueness and infinite relatedness, where psychologists' couches and philosophers' speculations finally fall short, the mysteries step forward. There is no more important knowledge than to discover who you are, why you are here, and where you can go. But you can only make that discovery yourself. Self-discovery, although it in-

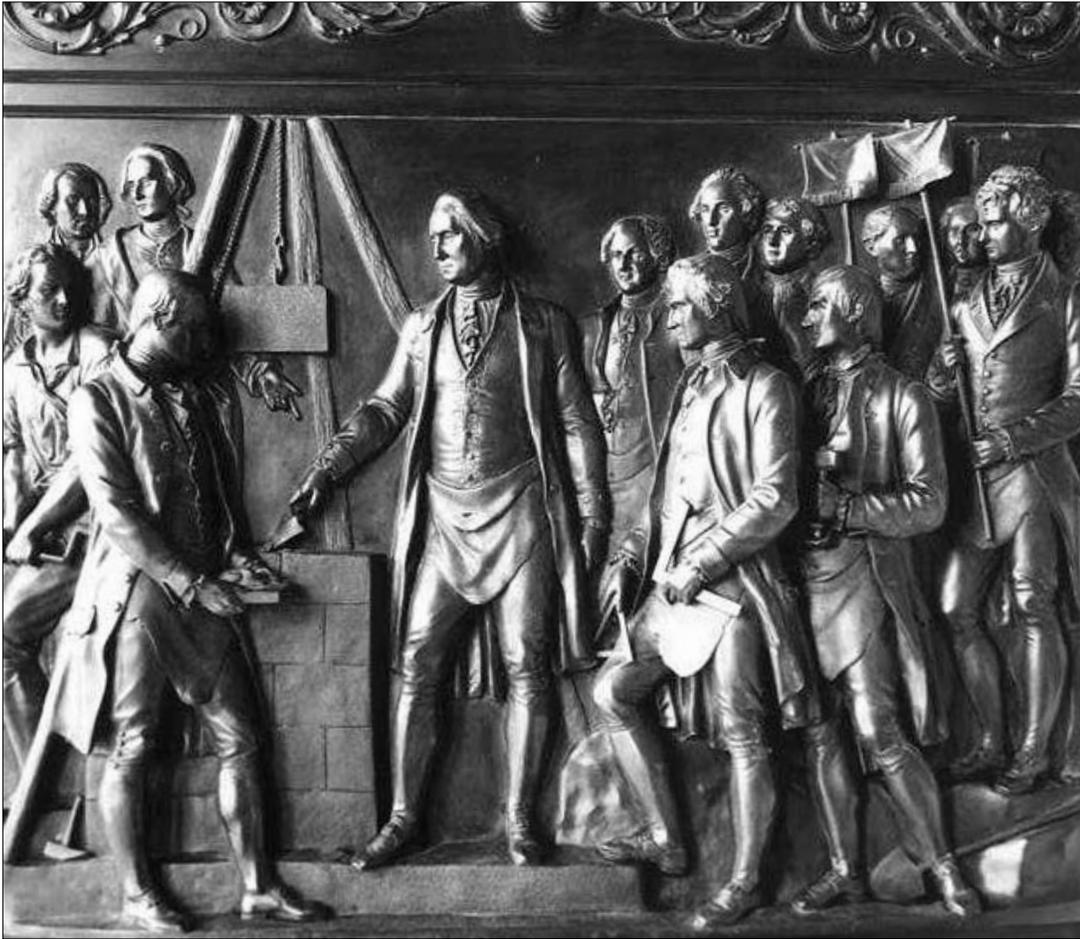
cludes relatedness to others, is not a spectator sport. It is impossible to fully reveal the infinite self.¹³

But there is also a communal aspect to the sacred secret, and that is assuring the trustworthiness of those with whom we share sacred experiences. Trust in the discipline, capacity, and good will of another is highly valuable to social and psychological order. Hugh Nibley emphasized the utility of secret, sacred silence as both a personal test of integrity and a social trust-building exercise.¹⁴ He argued that in the ancient world, since everyone knew the basic content of the secret, sacred rites already, the test of maintaining secrecy was a personal one, to see who held the secret to be sacred and who dismissed it as trivial. The sacred words and tokens in themselves possess lifting power only when exercised by a sincere initiate. Those who revealed a sacred secret after promising not to prove to themselves, the gods, and others that they did not believe the secret was sacred—that they never truly participated in the rites as a sincere initiate. They went through motions without actually obtaining the spiritual power of the mysteries.

One of my hopes for this meditation on the sacred secret in general is to convey the message that Mormonism's temple rite builds solidarity of community with non-Mormons. With this in mind, would we Mormons be better off positioning ourselves as God's fools—impressing only a few other “fools” who understand that in a profane world, the fools who respect silence are really the wise? Or would we be better off trying to build trust in a society that would accept more of our influence if we were respected broadly as a reasonably normal people who have no important secrets? In other words, can the negative aspect of secretiveness be extracted from the Mormon reputation without trying to make the secret, sacred temple rites “transparent” to all, which, ironically, would be a way of dissembling?

I am not a public relations specialist, but I do think Latter-day Saints should be able to do a better job of persuading the public generally that our secret, sacred temple rites are character-building and hope-engendering activities that make our initiates better members of society. We should be able to convince people who do not trust our honest intent of blessing all mankind through our temple rites that the Mormon secret, sacred mystery inspires love and concern for every human being who has ever lived. The secret, hidden from all at birth, to which words can only point, is the basic teaching that all human beings are actually everlasting beings—gods on an eternal quest for greater experience, growth, and joy. The following are a few of my meditations on the temple's sacred secret, which I share with the purpose of providing ideas which might inspire those of our brothers and sisters who are open to accepting us as potential leaders, not untrustworthy misfits.

First, we should better convey that the Mormon message is of a restoration, one that includes a restoration of all things spoken by previous inspired prophets. Part of this restored fullness is the ancient sacred teaching that each



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person has a divine nature and destiny and that God desires to persuade all people by their free choice to reunite as a loving human family in the life to come. This work of preparing the hearts and minds of people to include strangers in their extended family is symbolically done in the Mormon temple, where prayers and rites to bless all mankind are accomplished without the least attempt at coercing the conscience of anyone. The secret, sacred truth for the Saints is that we are all everlasting brothers and sisters born of Heavenly Parents, divine even if we call ourselves human in our current conditions. If everlasting life is a fundamental definition of divinity (D&C 132), then all humans are gods. That which lasts in each of us—our deepest identity—is divine.

Second, we should emphasize how this truth is so fundamentally important that it is truly the quintessential sacred secret—one we deem so vital that we don't reiterate it in everyday discourse lest it become banal and misinterpreted,

losing its power to inspire people. Hence, initiates promise not to disclose in public particular symbols of the sacred learning. Additionally, keeping this trust increases the cohesion of our community. The sacred secret might be known by everyone in the society (making it hardly a secret in that sense), but the common discipline to keep silent about it in public provides a trusting bond of community. The sacred secret is a knowledge that benefits everyone by calling initiates to respect the divine freedom in each human person.

Third, we need to positively rehabilitate the word "secret," aligning it with intimacy and social responsibility rather than allowing its pejorative connotations of "cover ups" and sinister plotting to persist. If we use the ancient sacred mysteries to contextualize our rites, we can explain the temple's sacred secrecy without breaking our covenant of silence on certain matters. I believe

we can also learn to say something like this: "Not all secrets cover evil intent. Just as spouses keep their most intimate moments of sharing to themselves, we Mormons keep our most intimate moments of experiencing connection with God to ourselves. These are good secrets, consisting of promises we have made to God and ourselves that we keep in our hearts. They provide the foundation for our attempt to live with integrity."

Fourth, we Latter-day Saints could become specialists in "ascent literature" or "the history of the secret sacred story of mankind." When others hear us refer to "ours" as the only true and living church, let's not forget to add that this "we" includes all those who from the beginning of the world have had the secret sacred story in their souls. Our true and living message is to reveal (or remind) that each person is a divine son or daughter of God. Our church exists to reunite a family order. This inclusive idea can make the temple story a story that belongs to all people in all cultures. Daniel

Peterson and others have done wonderful work regarding ancient views of the sacred secret of divinization.¹⁵ We could do a much better job of leveraging this scholarship, using it to better explain the context of our temple rites. Perhaps we could create a center for the study of sacred stories of the ascent of humanity. This would invite non-LDS scholars to participate in the restoring knowledge of the trustworthiness of sacred rituals.

From a cultural anthropological viewpoint, the sacred secret is the foundation of civilization: we are not just short-lived animals trying to survive without killing too many of our kind in the process; we are everlasting divine persons who will be very important to each other in worlds to come. We have a stake in this world as it builds to the next.

Finally, to some, the Mormon temple might look like a fortress to keep unwanted people out, but as the house of the Lord, it is designed to be hospitable—an inviting meeting place for a reunion of all members, living and dead, of the entire human family. In fact, personalized invitations to come home are researched by name, place, and time on earth. We Mormons believe we are helping to weld together the whole human family in a post-mortal society of friendship—believing that neither our ancestors without us, nor we without them, can be complete in the world to come (Hebrews 11:40). We are assembling and storing the names of every human person we can find in the available records, creating an all-inclusive human catalogue, to provide all with vicarious rites of baptism and marriage that symbolize the unification of humanity in social relations throughout eternity. Perhaps no religion in the history of the world has been more actively outreaching and universal in scope than this.

Yet even though the aim of temples is to bring every living soul who has ever lived into the eternal family, we bar nearly everyone from entering the sacred precincts. I believe we can address this disjunction far better than we currently do.

Perhaps the temple, as a symbol of Mormonism to the public, could be usefully “repositioned” as a refuge for the weary, open to all who reverently come to think and rest in the shade of its gardens or rejoice with family and friends in its outer courts. The ancient temple of the Hebrews included an open Court of the Gentiles, and further in, the place for covenant and sacrifice. Only the Holy of Holies was strictly reserved for the special occasions of intimate encounter with God.

The designs of newer or remodeled LDS temples are already including larger entrance foyers before the recommend checkpoint, but they might be designed to be even more generous and inviting in the outer-court spaces, providing specific indoor areas for public receptions after weddings and other family-oriented events. While rooms farther in are set aside for initiating covenant-makers and performing other sacred ordinances, the temple can be designed more like the hospitable heavenly home for all humanity, not a fort designed to keep out strangers. All the children of our Heavenly Parents who are willing to take their shoes off

should feel welcome in the front room of the house of the Lord.

Mormon temple rites are easily accessed on the Internet. The HBO series *Big Love* recently showed portions of our sacred ceremonies on television. We as Latter-day Saints can do nothing about events like that. The “secret” is out—but not the sacred. Those who have sincerely received initiation in the mysteries of godliness will always know things that mere religious tourists or voyeurs (Mormon or not) cannot know until they undergo the change of heart and mind required to truly see. “No man hath seen God at any time except them that believe” (1 John 4:12, JST).

No matter what outsiders believe—even if they scoff at us—our temple rite is a sacred secret that affirms that the gods desire company, that the family reunion is for all, that “we” without “them”—even the scoffers—cannot be a completely joyful family. This is the perennial problem of love inherent to all families on earth and in heaven: true loyalty can not be coerced, only enticed. So let us would-be lovers be enticing.

I believe that when we understand why others mistrust us, we can let them know we understand, and build trust through sincere communication, opening hearts with our candor, allowing for deeper conversations to occur about what our questioners hold to be sacredly secret in their lives.

Those who do not desire to trust us never will, but we can give reason for the hope we have. I believe we will build the nation’s confidence in our trustworthy leadership capacity if we tell others by word and action, “I hold a secret that is sacred to me, but I assure you it is good news for all, and it only enhances my respect and love for you here and now.”

NOTES

1. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1987), 7–11, 36–38, 50–53, 72–79, 86–88, 96–97, 105–108, 113–114. Burkert debunks any confident claims of interpreting the ancient mysteries, but allows for many possibilities. I have used his research extensively in this paper. I also have used Hugh Nibley’s unpublished paper, “The Endowment,” in my possession to make connections between Mormon and classical period mysteries. Nibley believed that *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles’ unique mystery play, was an “endowment” tragicomedy showing the glorious and indescribable end of Oedipus.

2. Cicero, *Laws* II, xiv, 36.

3. See Martin Nilsson, *Greek Popular Religion* (New York City: Columbia University Press: 1947).

4. The Greek and Roman comedies and tragedies used surprise reversals for dramatic power and, in the case of comedy, to fulfill psychological yearning. Shakespeare used (and reused) as his template Plautus’ *Menaechmuses*, the archetypal Roman comedy plot of switched identity, because it touched common audiences with the happy surprise—the good news they all desire: that they are really royalty. Mistaken-identity comedies (in counterweight to mistaken-identity tragedies like Sophocles’s *Oedipus*) allow that the happy ending has already happened if the protagonist could just see it: we are really princes and princesses who will get to marry our lovers. I am arguing that this impulse was probably central to the mystery rites.

5. How can it be in a world of curiosity and bribery that we have no actual texts of the ancient initiations of the several Greek mystery cults? The most respected scholar on this subject assumes initiates were moved deeply by the experience and took their vows seriously: “Being ignorant of the ritual and unable to reproduce it, we cannot recreate this [mysterious] experience, but we may

acknowledge that . . . an amazing event of sympatheia . . . was there” (Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 114).

6. An additional connection between Mormonism and the ancient mystery rites that I don’t explore in this essay is their inclusion of women—their initiation of women and the central role played by female goddesses in the Eleusinean and Isis rites.

7. The U.S. presidents who were Freemasons are: George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James Polk, James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, James Garfield, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Howard Taft, Warren Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Gerald Ford. For a more extensive list of the Founders and others who were Masons, see www.freemasonry.bcy.ca/textfiles/famous.html.

8. Lincoln applied for membership in Tyrian Lodge, Springfield, Ill., shortly after his nomination for the presidency in 1860 but withdrew the application because he felt that his applying for membership at that time might be construed as a political ruse to obtain votes. He advised the lodge that he would resubmit his application again when he returned from the presidency. He never returned. On the death of the president, Tyrian Lodge adopted, on 17 April 1865, a resolution stating that Lincoln postponed his decision to apply for Freemasonry membership lest his motives be misconstrued (William R. Denslow, *10,000 Famous Freemasons*, 4 vol., Trenton, MI: Missouri Lodge of Research, 1957-61).

9. See www.gwmemorial.org for an image of Washington laying the Capital cornerstone. He was a Master Mason, like many of the Founders.

10. It isn’t just Mitt Romney who can be accused of appearing to be a “flip-flopper.” We Mormons, who espouse continuous revelation from God, might also seem like pragmatic flip-floppers who try to win converts (if not elections) with convenient revelatory updates. One day we believe in polygamy; the next day we don’t (at least we say). One day we believe God tells us no blacks can hold priesthood and participate in temple rites; the next day they can. One day we say we are not involved in politics; the next day we are. One day we say we are Christian like everybody else; the next day we say, well, not quite like the Catholics or Protestants. One day we invite others to church; the next day we say they can’t see their children married in our temples. These, of course, all seem like reasonable actions to us Mormons, but it’s easy to see how they can seem “shifty” to Americans who are not used to the idea of a church led by continuous revelation.

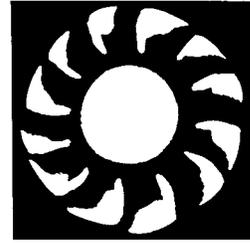
11. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 176.

12. In Joseph Smith’s revealed account of Moses’s learning the secret sacred mystery, we see the irony of a person grasping the relative nothingness of limited human awareness and knowledge in the mortal world, and then seeing that even in this feeble state, humans are actually immortal sons and daughters of divinity. The facts of human forgetting, and aging, and dying helplessly provide the stark contrast that makes the mystery mysterious (See Moses 1). This world is designed so the reality of everlasting life is not obvious, in order for the humans (gods) to appreciate their eternal lives when knowledge of the everlasting context is returned to them in the eternities. Humans became “nothing” in order to appreciate being infinite.

13. I believe the biblical author tried to tell us something by showing only God’s back parts to Moses (Exodus 33:23). To know God is to know that God cannot be fully known—nor can any eternal being in the process of becoming. Even after seeing God face-to-face in conversation, Joseph Smith left the Sacred Grove with a lifetime’s worth of questions.

14. I have drawn these ideas about the role the mysteries played in proving personal integrity as well as building community from two unpublished talks given by Hugh Nibley in the late 1980s. “The History of the Endowment” (dated June 1986) and “Temple” (undated). Photocopies of typed transcripts of these talks (with Nibley’s handwritten notes) are in my possession.

15. Daniel C. Peterson, “Ye Are Gods: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, edited by Stephen Ricks, Donald Perry and Andrew Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 471–594; Blake Ostler, “The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis,” *BYU Studies*, 26/4 (1986): 67–95; Stephen D. Ricks, “The Narrative Call Pattern in the Prophetic Commission of Enoch (Moses 6),” *BYU Studies* 26 (Fall 1986): 97-105; Daniel C. Peterson, Stephen D. Ricks, “The Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muhammad,” in Ricks, Perry, and Hedges, eds., *The Disciple as Scholar*, 323–371; Ben McQuire, “Reconsidering Psalms 82:6, Judges or Gods? A Proposal,” http://www.fairlds.org/Bible/Reconsidering_Psalms_82_6.html (accessed 5 May 2009).



MY FIRST SON, STILLBORN

Driving endless north
I saw wispy fingers parting
a curtain of clouds

As a child I tried to catch sunbeams
Awkward arms stretched to embrace light
But found light shred into dust

What for once I yearned,
My son, I could not touch

A brilliant mirage
Parts turrets of gray—

I see a quiet head
Against my breast,
Soft peach prints, tiny replicas
Fitted in my palms

—SHANNON MILLIMAN

AFTER RAIN PANTOUM

Oh, God in Heaven,
why do you come here always after the rain
with the earthsmell and the water stippled leaves
the frail light tentative and hovering

why do you come here always after the rain
is it Noah again the dove landing
the frail light tentative and hovering
turbulence done and something like a promise?

is it Noah again the dove landing?
is it the first deep breath of clearer air
turbulence done and something like a promise,
praise in the throat desiring to be sung?

is it the first deep breath of clearer air
with the earthsmell and the water stippled leaves
praise in the throat desiring to be sung?
Oh, God in Heaven.

—JANET MCCANN